Reviewer's report

Title: Physical Activity and Water Consumption in Preschoolers: Focus Groups with Parents and Teachers

Version: 2 Date: 22 January 2013

Reviewer: Trina Hinkley

Reviewer's report:

I thank the authors for the major changes they have made to this manuscript following the previous round of reviews. Their changes have greatly strengthened the paper. However, some issues still remain.

Major compulsory revisions

1. The results section is overly long and repetitive in parts. While the changes made with more detail and the inclusion of quotes to support their findings are excellent, and greatly strengthen the paper, the section is, in parts, repetitive and more wordy than it needs to be. The authors should combine various sections of the results to be much more parsimonious and succinct. For instance, the subsections in PA/parents on influencing factors, strategies to increase & barriers could all be combined as they largely overlap - strategies to increas & barriers are also influencing factors. It may be possible to also combine parent and teacher sections for each of PA & water consumption together. This would allow for easier comparison between parents and teachers and also highlight areas where they agree - such as that children are active enough and need to have time out either a) to rest (for parents) or b) to learn to sit still for school (teachers).

2. Some sections of the discussion read more like results - for instance, page 30, most of the first para. This makes it repetitive and removes the opportunity for more discussion on the implications of the findings. This aspect - implications of the findings - could also be strengthened in the discussion.

3. Tables 2 & 3 could be removed - it is not common to publish the interview guide used and does not really add anything to the paper.

Minor essential revisions

4. Abstract, last sentence of the background: the word "these" should be removed so the sentence reads "... and anticipated barriers to make changes"

5. Introduction: Lines 91-03 - the authors include details about preschoolers' PA levels but need to provide a point of comparison - is 7.7 min/h in MVPA appropriate or is it too low or too high? Similarly for 42.8 min/day of MVPA? Also, the authors should include details on whether or not children are meeting the recommendations rather than the amount of time they spend in MVPA. I question also the use of time in MVPA when recent recommendations (Australian,
Canadian, UK) stipulate that any intensity of activity is appropriate. There are some recent studies published on meeting recommendations - see for instance Beets 2011 and Hinkley 2012.

6. lines 94-6 - "limited evidence was found for the link between diet and health" - this tells readers basically nothing - what did they find? What gaps did they identify? How does that review support your current study?

7. line 110 "trouble finding enough time ..., time" this is repetitive. The second time should be removed.

8. lines 118-121 - it is great that the authors have included some details of preschool attendance. However, the way the sentence is currently worded is ambiguous and needs clarification - for instance - about 99% in Belgium - is this 99% of the children's time (obviously not) or 99% of children attending preschool? Same issue for the other countries.

9. line 129 - "... children's PA (current levels, ..." it is well beyond the scope of a qual study to investigate current levels of anything. What this type of research can add is the parents' and teachers' perspective about children's PA, but not the actual levels themselves. This requires clarification.

10. Results - PA in 6 Euro countries: line 321 - PA in one Euro country is not necessarily the same as in another country - do you mean activity itself is different or the children do different types of activities or the perception of children's PA is different between countries or something else? This sentence is ambiguous. For me, the differences between countries could easily be one of the most interesting parts of this paper, however it is not well discussed in any part of the paper and should be enhanced to provide greater interest and more original contribution.

11. lines 550-553 - parent goal setting following activity monitor report - this is a very simplistic idea about how behaviour change occurs. Despite the report that parents believe feedback from scientists may be useful in changing their child's behaviour, goal setting is only one strategy parents may use to manage their child's behaviours and is unlikely to be effective in & of itself. The authors, at the very least, need to clarify that this is just one strategy which might be used. Unsupported by other strategies - and perhaps changes in the environment - individual level strategies such as goal setting are likely to fail.

12. lines 559-569 - If evidence already published suggests that the strategies the authors discuss to change their child's behaviours (such as taking things home from preschool) are ineffective, it is unclear why the authors have undertaken a detailed discussion of those strategies during which they sound like they are suggesting they be trialled, only to be followed by the statements that they have previously been found ineffective. The authors would be much better off to state at the outset that the strategies parents suggest to change their child's behaviours have already been shown to be ineffective and save their more detailed discussion for areas which may offer promise.
13. I think the authors for include the information about policies at lines 613-615. However, my previous comment at policies (which obviously I did not make clear - my apologies) was aimed more at broader region or country-level policies, rather than policies within the centres themselves. Are there policies in place in any of the countries which might support PA or water consumption which could also thereby explain the differences found between participant reports in each of those countries? For instance, Canada has a policy which requires preschools to include PA for their children and this is then reflected in the individual centre policies, practices and environments which preschools provide for their children.

14. line 618 - conduction of focus groups should be should be undertaking, or running or facilitation or something else - conduction refers to an electrical impulse through a wire or something similar.

15. lines 618-620 - I strongly disagree that this is the main strength of the article. Instead, I would argue that the main strength is the cross-country focus as this is what is really unique about this study.

16. line 635: "different aspects or themes might have been empahsised in the six ..." Yes, this may well be true and the authors are right to include it in their limitations. However, as stated above, there may have been genuine differences between countries and this would be interesting to come through more strongly in the results/discussion

17. REVIEWER COMMENTS
Reviewer 4; comment 14: The authors state they could not find any quantitative data reporting comparisons of PA in Bulgaria with other countries - surely there is some data which reports PA levels in each country even if it is not comparing between the countries? And if not, the authors could do well to identify this as a gap requiring attention and provide some conjecture about the possible reasons why Bulgarian teachers might think their preschool children are not active enough when others think they are too active???

18. Reviewer 4 comment 17: nice response - the authors could/should include this type of information in the discussion

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests